AFTER PSC PROTEST

STATE SHIFTS COURSE ON NEW TEACHER TEST

The PSC's statewide affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), has reached an agreement with the State Education Department to delay full implementation of the controversial new teacher certification exam (known as "edTPA") until June 30, 2015. The change came after months of organizing by education faculty at CUNY and SUNY. The agreement calls for a task force on teacher education, with representation from the PSC and SUNY's to review and consider changes to the high-stakes exam. Above, from left: PSC First VP Steve London, NYSUT's Andy Pallotta, UUP's Fred Kowal at a hearing in Albany.

YOUR RIGHTS
Check your personnel file
It's your professional and academic record and is used in promotion decisions. Reviewing your file at least once a year ensures it is accurate and complete.

'TAX-FREE NY'
START-UP NY comes to CUNY
START-UP NY gives huge tax breaks to businesses, offering them space on CUNY campuses. Will that benefit CUNY and the public? It's up for debate.

PATHWAYS
Faculty defend curriculum role
An overwhelming vote at Brooklyn College says faculty – not CUNY central – must chart out new general education requirements.

CUNY HISTORY
Queens College & civil rights
Fifty years after Freedom Summer, Queens College is looking back at its history with the civil rights movement, & what it means for today.
Office work and healthy bodies

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The first time Jackie Elliot went to the Northeast Summer School for Union Women, she had been a PSC member for nearly three decades and was already active in the union. But, she says, she got an “extra push” from the five-day conference last year, which left her ready to assume more responsibility. Along with classes and workshops on collective bargaining, labor law and leadership skills, the school also offers training. Elliot took that class last summer and earlier this year she had been a grievance counselor for the union.

MakIng COOnnECtIOns

“Everything started to fall into place. It gave me a lot more confidence,” she told Clarion. “I plan to go there for as long as I can. It had that much of an effect.”

What stood out the most for Elliot, she says, was the school’s strong sense of sisterhood. She recalls talking and learning from women across the union movement: “It’s the sisterhood,” she told Clarion. “I plan to go there for as long as I can. It had that much of an effect.”

The school brings together rank and file women workers, officers and staff to strengthen their knowledge of the labor movement and develop their skills, enabling them to seek leadership positions within their unions. The school is both a learning institution, but attracts – and expects faculty to perform as – research faculty.

Summer ‘school’ builds leaders

Jackie Elliot (L) and Debra Bergen (R) are both on the planning committee for this summer’s Northeast Summer School for Union Women that will take place on Queens College campus from July 26-31.

Elliot is helping plan this year’s summer school, which will be held in New York City for the first time in its nearly 40-year history. The PSC and CUNY’s Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies are co-sponsoring the conference with the United Association for Labor Educators. It will be held on the Queens College campus from July 26-31.

The conference is rooted in the traditions of early workers’ education as exemplified by the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers of the 1920’s and the WPA in four education programs at the 1930’s. Encouraged by the rising feminist movement of the seven ties, the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and the United Association of Labor Educators (UALB) launched the current school in 1975. Designed by a committee of labor educators, the residential school brings together rank and file women workers, officers and staff to strengthen their knowledge of the labor movement and to develop their skills, enabling them to seek leadership positions within their unions. The school has helped members of the Coalition of Labor Union Women, (CLUW), and the United Association of Labor Educators (UALB) launch the current school in 1975.

The school’s Summer School for Union Women, go to sps.cuny.edu/events/35. The school will be held July 26-31 at Queens College.

NEWS & LETTERS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR |

WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 43 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10013. EMAIL: PHOGNESS@PSC/SMALL. ORG. FAX: 212-302-7815.

Shomial Ahmad

Shomial Ahmad
By PETER ROSNESS

The May 1 announcement of a tentative contract settlement between negotiators for New York City and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) signaled that the massive logjam in municipal bargaining was beginning to break up. But it’s still a large logjam, and the remaining 153 expired contracts will take some time to resolve.

The proposed agreement, which will be voted on by UFT members, provides raises totaling 18% over a nine-year period. Most of the raises, and most of the contract’s retroactive pay, would be paid out toward the end.

BARGAINING RETURNS

The tentative deal came after several years in which former mayor, Michael Bloomberg, refused to engage in real bargaining with the City’s workforce, demanding harsh concessions and offering nothing in return. Mayor Bill de Blasio’s administration’s willingness to actually negotiate was greeted with some relief in municipal labor circles: “Bargaining Back in Style,” said a headline in The Chief, New York City’s civil service weekly.

Bringing the bargaining to a successful conclusion is another story. Bloomberg budgeted no money for City worker raises for several years running, leaving the new administration in a fiscal hole. The UFT deal – with a nine-year term that may be the longest in the city’s history, according to The Chief – includes some unique features that would be hard to apply to other unions, so the pace of other negotiations is likely to vary. Historically, CUNY has not settled the PSC contract until most of the other municipal contracts are complete, in part because of the complexity of CUNY funding.

“The big question is what the UFT settlement means for us,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “One thing it means for sure is that there will now be momentum to settle other contracts. And the PSC bargaining team is ready to act fast. But we want a contract that moves our members forward – economically and in other ways – and that may take several months to hammer out, given that CUNY negotiations involve New York State as well as New York City,” Bowen said.

“The needs of our union are different from the needs of the UFT, and we will seek to craft an agreement that improves our salaries and lives at CUNY,” she told Clarion. “As a union that has been active politically and whose members have shown we are willing to organize, the PSC is in a good position to make the most of this moment.”

The last UFT contract expired in 2009, and the first two years of the new agreement would cover a period in which the “pattern” for City unions settlements was to increase each year. The settlement would give UFT members matching raises, but they will not start receiving the raises until much later: 2% would be added to members’ paychecks each year for four years, starting in May 2015. Retroactive pay for the period starting in 2009 would be paid in installments between 2015 and 2020.

In addition, members would get a $1,000 signing bonus one time with a 0% raise, 3% raises for three years, and raises of 1.5%, 2.5% and 3% in the final three years. (A UFT chart lays out the complex schedule of these salary changes; see tinyurl.com/UFT-chart-2009-2020.)

MUNICIPAL LABOR

The tentative deal is contingent on reaching a target of $1.3 billion in reductions in the annual cost of health care for the City’s workforce by four years from now. The Municipal Labor Committee (MLC), the coalition that negotiates health insurance for all municipal unions, including the PSC, identified proposed cost-savings that would not increase expenses to members, and voted to approve the proposal. The MLC had argued for some years that the City could be more efficient in providing health coverage to its employees, but the Bloomberg administration had been unwilling to seriously consider merging the City’s and the hospital system, the resulting savings toward wages.

The City also agreed to increases in per capita welfare fund contributions for active and retired employees in each of the next four years, and to provide additional funds on a recurring basis thereafter. In addition, the MLC is committed to working with the City to shift certain very high-cost drugs, and other items, to a City-funded program, and out of the individual welfare funds. Such a change would help thousands of New Yorkers coping with life-altering diseases.

The other development in public worker contracts came with a tentative contract agreement for NYC transit workers. Negotiators for Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 announced the agreement April 17. It provides for raises totaling more than 8% over a five-year period, some increases in members’ health care costs and some improvements in benefits. New hires would now need five years, rather than the current three, to reach full rates of pay. Perhaps the most notable feature of the TWU settlement was that it marked a shift away from the three years of 0% wage increases that Gov. Cuomo had insisted on imposing on State employees in contract settlements.

The PSC is in a good position to make some increases in members’ health-care benefits. The TWU settlement was that it marked a shift away from the three years of 0% wage increases that Gov. Cuomo had insisted on imposing on State employees in contract settlements. The civil service employees Association (CSEA), Public Employees Federation (PEF) and UUP, the faculty and staff union at SUNY, also settled contracts in November 2011, August 2013.

In 2012, the Daily News reported that “Cuomo…made it clear he expects MTA workers to follow the example set by the state’s two largest public employee unions – the CSEA and Public Employees Federation – which accepted contracts in 2011 that included no wage increases for three years.”

NO ZEROS

Asked about the change, State officials pointed to the MTA’s savings from the provisions on health costs and new hire pay. But those do not come close to paying for the proposed pact’s wage increases, according to The New York Times, wages and benefits in the new agreement would be worth $325 million more than before.

“The PSC has argued all along that there is money available to the State and the City to sign a fair contract,” commented Bowen, “and we are pleased to see movement toward increased funding. The key to our success will be creating viable, organized, undeniable pressure from members. That’s what has won every advance we have ever achieved.”

By CLARION STAFF

CUNY has instructed college administrations to make “every effort...to ensure that adjunct faculty are paid on time,” and has circulated a list of “best practices” to ensure timely adjunct paychecks.

The March 14 memo includes a measure that had been urged by the PSC: designating a specific staff member to track adjunct appointments “before and during the beginning of a semester,” to “continuously monitor” the progress of paperwork and take action if hiring documents are not filed on time. The college administration is directed to newly hired teaching adjuncts, “the guidelines say, to receive a formal appointment on time at the start of a semester has often been a problem at CUNY colleges (see Clarion, Nov. 30, 2013, Oct. 12, 2012, March 2009). Last year there was widespread anger at Queens College (QC) when more than a third of the school’s 1,000 adjuncts got no paycheck in the first fall pay period. About 100 were still unpaid after the second pay period, more than a month into the semester.

“I was furious that I was being put in this situation,” said a 15-year QC instructor who did not want to be named, because he is not yet sure about his future at the school. “I know I should have been paid, after he spoke with an administrator – but other instructors have been told that this emergency pay was available.”

Pearson said the response of top college officials was evasive. “They blamed the problem on other people,” he told Clarion last October. “No one seemed to want to take responsibility.”

“The PSC chapter at QC was persistent in pressing the issue,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “But Jonathan and chapter activists would not give up; their focus on detail is a big part of why we have these guidelines. The designated staff person and other measures are a good start, but what CUNY really should do is agree to long-term appointments for adjuncts – then we wouldn’t have this hiring chaos every semester.”

Buchsbaum said he sees the memo as a response to the organized reaction by PSC members to the problems last Fall. “It’s because people spoke out, and keeping doing so, that CUNY recognized this was an administrative disaster. Now they are taking steps to do the right thing,” he said.

“The experience for adjuncts at Queens last year was horrible,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “But Jonathan and chapter activists would not give up; their focus on detail is a big part of why we have these guidelines. The designated staff person and other measures are a good start, but what CUNY really should do is agree to long-term appointments for adjuncts – then we wouldn’t have this hiring chaos every semester.”

UNION ACTION

How well colleges implement the guidelines remains to be seen, Buchsbaum added. But here again, he suggested, action by union members can help: “PSC members must be ready to work together to ensure that the guidelines are being observed on their campus is following these procedures and what has been done so far.”

CUNY’s first adjunct pay dates for the Fall 2014 semester will be September 12 at the community colleges and September 18 at the senior colleges.

Taking steps to ensure timely adjunct pay

Transit workers settle, too

Clarinon | May 2014

City, UFT reach tentative contract deal

2,521 signatures protesting CUNY’s new rigid timesheets were delivered to CUNY Central on March 28. From left: Bob Nelson, Alan Pearlman, Steve London, Iris DeLutro, Mike Fabricant, Albert Sherman, Barbara Bowen, Paul Washington.

Timesheet petition a hit
Pre-K expansion helps PSC members

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

“We think of the union as an organization that shapes our life while we’re at work,” says Geoff Kurtz, assistant professor of political science at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC). “But through the PSC, we got paid parental leave in our contract and we worked to elect a mayor who expanded pre-K.” That illustrates, he said, how union action “can make our whole lives more livable, more humane.”

Kurtz benefited from paid parental leave when his son was born. Years ago, he would have had only a block of paid time in the first year after his son was born. That also applies to his wife Alyson Campbell applied to two public pre-K schools near their home in Kensington, Brooklyn. Their son Lewis has a good chance of getting into one of them, he noted, and their zip code is 70,000 slots — “enough for four-year-old in the city,” he said.

Continuing, he noted, “The PSC has an expanded pre-K program throughout the city, with a goal of offering 53,000 full-day seats by the 2014-15 school year. At present, Greble says, her son, Emily Greble has a son born almost four years ago, and is looking forward to enrolling Lewis in a public pre-kindergarten class when he is four.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The PSC was an early supporter of Bill de Blasio’s campaign for mayor, in large part because of his emphasis on increasing support for public education. The union backed de Blasio, Mayor de Blasio’s fight for universal, full-day pre-K, which secured $100 million in State funding this year. For CUNY, the city is now expanding pre-K programs throughout the city, with a goal of offering 53,000 full-day seats by the 2014-15 school year. At present, Greble says, her son, Emily Greble has a son born almost four years ago, and is looking forward to enrolling Lewis in a public pre-kindergarten class when he is four.

By PETER HOGNESS

During last year’s election campaign, de Blasio de Blasio the “decades of State and City disinvestment” that had “undermined CUNY’s historic role — as a stepping-stone to the middle class for more than a generation of working-class youth.”

“A city cannot put on a more solid budgetary footing,” de Blasio called for the City to end its emphasis on tax breaks for large, well-connect- ed corporations, and instead move to increase funding for CUNY and for small-business loans, as more effective tools for boosting employment.

Such a shift, he said, would ultimately produce a $150 million increase in the City’s CUNY funding. When fully implemented, this would boost City support for CUNY by more than 50%, said Bowen, discussed several strateg- ies for additional support, which she said could realize de Blas- sio’s vision of “restoring CUNY as the central gateway to a quality education and a good job.”

She said, she noted, the PSC’s proposal for 1,000 new faculty lines is crucial: “The difference between CUNY and better-funded public institutions comes down to this: students at CUNY do not have enough time with individual faculty.”

“STUDENTS GAIN

CUNY’s Accelerated Study in As- sociate Programs Initiative shows why this matters, she said: “Classes are capped at 25 students. Counsel- ors have an average caseload of just 85 students. The results have been dramatic: The program’s three-year graduation rate is 50%, well over twice the rate for a comparison group in a recent study.” This shows what investing in adequate numbers of full-time faculty and staff can do, said Bowen, and why it is something that CUNY students need.

A substantial number of the new lines would be designated for existing part-time faculty, those most tested and experienced with CUNY students, Bowen told council members. Hiring for these new lines should also include greater efforts by CUNY to hire people of color, she said, “especially in faculty positions.”

Creating a needs-based scholar- ship program for CUNY, building on past council efforts, would be a criti- cal step toward cross-education educa- tion, Bowen said. “It is a myth that financial aid protects every poor student’s access when tuition increas- es,” she emphasized. Most part-time students, students who exceed the limit of eight semesters and undocu- mented students cannot receive aid, she noted.

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As Bowen noted, the City also has a role to play. Programs that prepare students for jobs in high-demand fields are important in a city with such stub- born inequalities, Bowen noted. “Such programs exist in the STEM fields and the applied science fields, and they prepare students for work as medical interpreters. “Our aston- ishingly polyglot university could develop other programs that re- spond to the emerging needs of this diverse city,” she suggested.

“ENGINE OF EQUALITY

Finally, she said, ongoing task force on CUNY and economic in- equality, with representatives from the City Council, the mayor’s office, the CUNY administration, the PSC, and community groups, could work to develop new ways in which CUNY can be a more equal institution. This, Bowen concluded, is a goal to which the PSC is proud to contribute.”

At Clarion press time, the ex- ecutive director of the PSC, appointed for 2014-2015 had not yet been re- leased. Bowen told Clarion that the PSC hopes it will contain at least some first steps toward realizing this kind of larger vision for CUNY.

Union action ‘makes our whole lives more livable.’

Jade and David Michaels play with their two sons, Eric and Michael. The Michaels hope their son Eric, who turns four this year, will benefit from the pre-K expansion.

hers how difficult it was to juggle work with the addition of their new daughter to the family. But Kurtz was able to spend eight weeks at home after his son was born.

“It made all the difference in the world to have time together as a family at this unique time. It’s so precious,” said Kurtz. “It was easier for my wife, recovering from childbirth and exhaustion. It was easier for our daughter, because she wasn’t robbed of parental attention.”

PERMANENT PART OF CONTRACT

Originally a pilot program with a limited amount of funds, paid paren- tal leave for part-time faculty was made permanent as part of the PSC contract in December 2011. The change is one of several agree- ments to improve CUNY since the expiration of the old contract (see Clarion, Dec. 2011). The College, among other things, included in the contract an engine of equality.” This, Bowen said,“is a goal to which the PSC is proud to contribute.”

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EdTPA protest makes gains

By PETER HOGNESS

PSC wins a delay on edTPA

The PSC’s statewide affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NY- SUT), has reached an agreement with the State Education Department (SED) to delay the full implementation of the controversial new teacher certification exam (known as “edTPA,” short for education teacher performance assessment) until June 30, 2015. The change came after months of organizing by education faculty at CUNY and SUNY, and it marked a significant change in course for New York State.

EdTPA is a multipart assessment of student teachers put forth as a requirement for teacher certification beginning May 1, 2014. The PSC, NYU, SUNY, City University of New York (CUNY), UFT, National Education Association (NEA), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the United Professional Association of Teachers (UP), and UUP have opposed edTPA, arguing that it effectively reduces teacher education to preparing for a high-stakes test. The union also strongly objected to outsourcing the test’s evaluation to Pearson, a for-profit corporation. EdTPA’s rushed development, said left insufficient time to prepare, potentially excluding many effective new teachers from the profession.

The delay “provides an important safety net for aspiring teachers,” a NYU statement said. The agreement provides that student teachers must take the edTPA starting this spring, but offers the option of taking New York’s current certification test, the Assessment of Teaching Skills-Written (ATS-W), for those who don’t pass the edTPA.

RUSHED EXAM

The agreement also calls for a task force of teacher education experts, working with NYSED, SUNY, and UUP, to review and consider changes to edTPA going forward. In response to concerns about edTPA’s steep schedule, those eligible for Pell grants will not be charged to take the test.

“Any changes should protect the student teachers who would be hurt first by edTPA, and give education faculty a formal structure for pressing their concerns about it,” said PSC First Vice President Steve London. The changes were approved by the PSC’s board on April 29, after days of intense discussions between NYSED, state legislators and the NY State Education Department (NYSED).

At a joint hearing the following day, the NY Assembly’s Higher Education and Education committees held an overflow crowd from education faculty from across the state. Noting that the PSC represents nearly 1,000 members of education faculty, London told legislators that “very little has rolled these professionals as much as edTPA.”

“The purpose of teacher education movement has, in part, been used as buzzwords to obfuscate practices that are unproven or, worse, suspect,” said London. “Standards is often the buzzword of choice. Who can be against standards?” But often, he noted, this cry “is used as a shield to obscure serious examination of the programs in question. Such is the case with edTPA.”

“EdTPA weds a high-stakes testing regime to a for-profit testing outfit, outsourcing professional assessment and certification,” argued London. “Most teacher educators with whom I’ve spoken say that this is actually a reduction in standards, and one which results in a narrowing of the teacher education curriculum. A common theme at the hearing was the lack of research supporting New York’s plans for edTPA. Ruth Powers Silverberg, associate professor of education at the College of Staten Island, described how, at the first meeting she attended about edTPA, she asked about the research it was based on, and was told she could find it on the website. “I went to the website where I found these arts. One of them was about edTPA. The other seven were on a variety of topics and all but one article had been authored by the creators of edTPA,” Silverberg said. “None of the articles provided evidence of edTPA’s ability to predict good teaching.”

RIGID RUBRICS

The rigid rubrics with which edTPA measures success for education faculty to spend their time “preparing our students for the equivalent of high-stakes tests,” said Peter Taubman, professor of secondary education at Brooklyn College. “A colleague...who teaches our social studies methods courses...told me yesterday that she now spends all her class time focusing on the 15 rubrics and, as she put it, explaining ‘their opaque language’, rather than on how to approach historical content,” Taubman said.

“She told me that she has to suspend analysis of primary sources and developing arguments and support-
It was the summer of 1964 – nearly 50 years ago – when about a thousand college students went down to Mississippi for Freedom Summer.

During Spring semester, Queens College participants were involved with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were working to recruit volunteers. In an effort dubbed Freedom Week, they organized speakers and fundraisers with the goal of supporting a summer campaign to register African Americans to vote and teach classes in “Freedom Schools” in Mississippi, then one of the most disenfranchised states in the union.

The Summer’s Beginnings

Barbara Omolade, then a senior at Queens College, sat at one of the recruitment tables. She recalls Freedom Week as having a visible, but small presence on campus at the beginning – much like many organizing campaigns today. It was during this week in April 1964 that an anthropology student named Andrew Goodman signed up for Freedom Summer.

“He was a regular student and what he did was extra strong,” said Omolade, who years later was a faculty member at CUNY’s Center for Worker Education. “Everybody was aware that Mississippi was dangerous. People had been killed. Medgar Evers had been murdered [in Jackson, Mississippi] the year before.”

That June, at the beginning of the campaign, Goodman and two other civil rights workers, James Chaney and Michael Schwerner, did not return from a trip to investigate an area burning. While federal officials searched for the three missing men, other volunteers continued the movement’s work. The bodies of the three men were not discovered until August; investigators learned they had been lynched by members of the Ku Klux Klan.

James Chaney was an African American civil rights worker from Mississippi, New Yorker Michael Schwerner had been working in Mississippi as a CORE field worker since the beginning of 1964; his wife, Rita Schwerner, was a Queens College student.

From Apathy to Activism

Outside the Queens College Rosenblatt Library, the Chaney-Goodman-Schwerner Clock Tower stands as a memorial to the lives and work of the three young activists. In a library, documents chronicling the movement and the summer of 1964 are part of the Queens College Civil Rights Movement Archive, now six years old. The collection includes many fragments of history, donated mainly by the college’s former students. Among the donations are letters home about a civil rights workers’ daily routines; an activist’s diary; and a letter from Andrew Goodman’s signature.

Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner were just three of the many thousands who took part in the civil rights movement’s campaigns despite threats of violence. Among the students who came from up north to support the fight waged by African Americans in the South, Queens College was well represented.

Longtime SNCC worker Dorothy Zellner graduated from Queens College in January 1960. Zellner was an editor at the campus paper, The Crown. Decades later, she returned to Queens to work on press and publications at the CUNY School of Law. Zellner recalls Queens College being in her student years as pretty apathetic.

“Compared to City College, it was dead as a doorbell,” said Zellner. “But there must have been things percolating.”

Months after graduation, she went down to Miami to participate in a sit-in organized by CORE. For her, that marked the start of nearly 20 years of living and working in the civil rights movement in the South. By 1964, through SNCC, Zellner was recruiting students from Northeastern colleges to go to Mississippi that summer. After organizing in the South for a couple of years – getting arrested, being pulled over and patted down by police for no reason, being knocked on the head by a cop – Zellner knew that this would not be just a summer trip.

“We were very concerned about divas and nutcases,” said Zellner. “We wanted people who had respect for the black community, who would not do something crazy like wearing shorts to church. We didn’t want prima donnas who said, ‘Oh okay, I’ll do this, but I won’t do that.’”

Mark Levy, Queens College ‘54, remembers talking to Zellner about Freedom Summer while traveling on a commercial bus line between Massachusetts and New York. Levy had been reluctant to join other campaigns, but the way Zellner talked about Freedom Summer was different.

“She talked about it not as a bunch of white freedom riders going down South, but as a request by local Mississippians to ‘Come on down and help us,’” said Levy. “So we were not going down as missionaries. It was something that I could say ‘Yes’ to.”

The Queens College that Mark Levy attended was far from apathetic. In 1961, Levy recalls, the majority of students boycotted classes to protest a speaker ban that had blocked Communist Party Secretary Benjamin Davis, Malcolm X and William F. Buckley from addressing students.

Campaign Activity

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Queens College ‘63, was one of the students who participated in the strike, which according to the college’s student newspaper involved 70% of the student body.

“I’ll never forget. My speech teacher was going to have a test that day and I thought, ‘Oh well, I’ll fail this,’” said Terborg-Penn. “But she did not join the walkout alone. It turns out that for a class of 35 students, only three students showed up.”

Terborg-Penn, who was one of the roughly hundred African-American students on campus at the time, recalls that there were no black professors when she first came to the college in 1959. When she graduated in 1963, there were three. Today Terborg-Penn, professor emerita of history at Morgan State, is a leading scholar of African American women’s history. Terborg-Penn was a member of the campus chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In the early 1960s, the group organized an ongoing picket outside of a Manhattan Woolworth’s in solidarity with Southern sit-ins against segregation.

In August 1963, the group traveled to DC for the March on Washington on a bus chartered by Quinnipiac University.

In the months before the historic march, close to 20 Queens College students traveled south to Prince Edward County in Virginia, where schools had been shut down in defiance of Brown v. Board of Education, to support the work of black churches in organizing their own classes.

“A lot of them did have the idea of saving black students in Virginia,” Terborg-Penn told Clarion. “I raised the question in the [NAACP] meeting. You’re going to send all these people, and they’re going to be in culture shock if they don’t live in a diverse community. They’re going to have problems.”

As training for the Virginia project, Terborg-Penn helped organize a tutoring program at her family’s church, St. Albans Congregational Church in Jamaica, Queens. The following year, a number of activists from Queens College took part in Freedom Summer.

In the summer of 1964, Mark Levy and former wife Betty Bollinger were among about ten current or former Queens College students who volunteered for the campaign in Mississippi. The summer’s assignment was to teach at a Freedom School set up in a Baptist seminary in Meridian, Mississippi.

“In the school we had a mission to ask questions... What’s this world we want to make? And how do we go about changing the world?” said Levy. “None of us had absolute answers. We were discussing those questions with six-year-olds, eight-year-olds, 16-year-olds, and then with 80-year-olds. It was very exciting.”

While Levy and Bollinger were in training in Ohio, the news broke that Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman had gone missing on June 21. Those still training, Levy recalls, felt strongly that they “had to keep on, keep on,” despite the risks.

Michael Schwerner’s brother, Skip Schwerner, who was working in the Queens College counseling department at the time, said, “After the news came out, everybody I knew and people who knew now rallied around me at Queens College.”

Schwerner said their support was unwavering, he recalls: “I felt like I wasn’t walking alone and being stared at. I was walking on campus and people were concerned.”

National Action

Rita Schwerner, Michael’s wife, was a Queens College student. In a statement to the press when the three men’s bodies were discovered, she put their deaths in sharp perspective: “It is only because my husband and Andrew Goodman were white that the national alarm has been sounded.”

Four thousand were born out by federal investigators: the search for Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman also unearthed the bodies of eight Mississippians. Among those included Charles Eddie Moore, a student who had been expelled from college for taking part in protests, and 14-year-old Herbert Gary, who had been wearing a CORE T-shirt. None of eight men’s disappearances had attracted more than local attention. “The people who killed them have never been prosecuted,” Steven Schwerner noted in 2005.

But the national attention did help build the movement, spurring others to take action across the country. In one of many examples, seven Queens College students went on a fast on campus during the July 4 weekend, demanding the school take action and money for the movement in Mississippi. That same week, the national Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was seen as a significant factor in passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Levy came back to Queens College in 1968-73. Like many Freedom Summer volunteers, he went on to become a lifelong activist, in his case working in labor movement.

Continued on page 9
In one of the most direct challenges to Pathways so far, full-time faculty at Brooklyn College (BC), voting for a resolution demanding that the Brooklyn College and CUNY administrations abide by decisions of local faculty, voted for a PSC slate general education program at Brooklyn College. The April 8 vote came at the Stated Meeting of the Faculty, a special college-wide gathering held once each semester.

"Too often, the Stated Meeting has been a place just for speeches and announcements," said Ken Eskey, assistant professor of political science at BC, reporting on the vote at the PSC Delegate Assembly two days later. "What we did was to reassert its governance role."

**STRONG TURNOUT**

The vote on the resolution was 298 in favor, 9 opposed and 18 abstentions. The lopsided result reflected BC faculty members' deep discontent with the CUNY administration's imposition of the controversial Pathways general education program, which was opposed by 92% of full-time faculty voting in a CUNY-wide referendum a year ago.

Pathways, the resolution contends, "has significantly under mined the educational standards at Brooklyn College, including the elimination of science labs, speech, and foreign language requirements." It notes that according to Brooklyn College's governance plan, "it is the faculty who determines the college's curriculum and degree requirements."

With the school's Faculty Council now "undertaking a process to develop new general education requirements at Brooklyn College," the resolution urges BC's administration to "implement whatever general education requirements are adopted by the Faculty Council." It calls on CUNY's central administration "to respect the historic role of the faculty in developing curric ulum" and do the same.

"I was impressed and pleased with the turnout," said Elaine Brooks of the Faculty Council's General Education Committee. "I have been at previous meetings where there was not a quorum, so it's a testament to the faculty's concern that they showed up to speak out." One reason for the strong response, she said, is that her committee is currently in the midst of a review of Pathways and has been seeking faculty input throughout the semester. "We've been sending around surveys, asking people to come to Town Hall discussions, and so on, as part of this review. I've been at Brooklyn College a long time now, and each time that there's been a review of the general education program, a lot of the faculty have been involved in articulating what they would like it to be," she told Clarion. "I think it's something the Brooklyn College faculty have taken pride in for the past 30 years. So this is on their mind, and it's to the faculty's credit that it motivated them to come."

**SPREADING THE WORD**

Brooks, who is deputy chair of BC's English department, also gave kudos to organizing by the college's union chapter. "The PSC chapter really made an effort to encourage people to show up," she said. "Not to push them one way or the other, but mainly to make sure they were aware that there would be a vote and that it was important that they attend." Jocelyn Wills, an associate professor of history and a PSC activist, said the vote reflected the depth of faculty concern about the quality of BC's curriculum. "Even people who were on sabatical, or going to be out of town, made sure to attend," she said. "The feeling that we've got strong at Brooklyn College." "The fact that we've got strong is testament to the faculty's concern for the quality of education - not just Pathways, but general education as a whole. A draft report is due to be distributed around the end of the semester. It will be discussed over summer, and the Faculty Council will consider action on it in the Fall."

The resolution was introduced at the Stated Meeting by Alex Vitale, associate professor of sociology and PSC chapter chair. The goal, he said, was "to support the Faculty Council's general education development process" and "develop the best possible educational program for our students."

"Across the country faculty are experiencing attacks on their control over the intellectual direction of their programs and colleges," he stated in a union statement. "Too often administrators are using cost savings as an excuse to undermine educational standards. The faculty at Brooklyn College should be outraged that their daily interaction with students and in-depth knowledge of the fields they work in best qualify them to make decisions about educational content."

The resolution declares that Brooklyn College faculty "have no confidence in the CUNY Board of Trustees as currently constituted to make curricular decisions."

"We are a board of trustees is almost completely devoid of educators," the union statement explained. "It is comprised of politically appointed, whose main qualification was political support for current and former mayors and government, rather than their expertise in educational policy."

"The Brooklyn Daily Eagle described the vote as a move to "retake control of curriculum decision making."" The college's faculty, sparked by opposition to both the content and process of the administration-imposed Pathways program, are now trying to show that Pathways "waters down the core curriculum and is meant as a cost-cutting measure," the paper reported. "Faculty members say they were excluded from the planning stages of the program," which served to "empower the college at the top."

"**CAN'T SIT BACK**"

A college administration spokesman acknowledged to the Eagle that "the president of Brooklyn College must transmit recommendations of the Faculty Council to the chancellor," but added that "the college is obligated to be guided by the broad framework of the Pathways initiative approved by the CUNY Board of Trustees."

That response highlighted that fact that "we can't just sit back," as the motion to "get to Pathways" said. "We've got to follow up and really hold their feet to the fire."

A thorough, independent review of the program is essential, and the continuous expression of dissent are both key, he said.

"This vote is about much more than just Pathways or general education. It's ultimately about faculty power," Vitale wrote in a campus-wide e-mail. "So far, in higher education we have avoided some of the worst abuses meted out on K-12 teachers, but there are many out there who would like to see us disempowered in the same way, through high-stakes testing, one-size-fits-all curriculum and the erosion of faculty governance."

PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant called the overthrowing vote for the Busty is "a remarkable victory." In discussion at the union's April Delegate Assembly, Fabricant said the resolution was important for their "tie with a new chancellor coming in, CUNY faculty need to make clear where we stand."

"This year's COCAL conference takes place in John Jay College, from August 4-6. Early registration is $225, attendees registering after May 30 pay $250. For further information, visit www.cocalinternational.org.
Big Pharma's profits & the public interest

By CLARION STAFF

In the past several decades, advances in prescription medications have cured diseases that had been incurable, relieved pain that once had to be endured, and controlled the symptoms of many chronic conditions. The increased efficacy of pharmaceuticals has kept people out of the hospital, living longer and living more active lives.

At the same time, while prescription drugs are marketed as simple cures-all, they are not. Some drugs are easy to administer and have very few side effects; some are exactly the opposite, with the cost to the body potentially causing the benefit. Some don’t work very well at all, or are effective for certain people but useless for others. Some drugs can be powerfully addictive, even when used as advised.

Big Pharma

Yet studies have shown a majority of patients consider a visit to a physician to be a failure if it doesn’t result in at least one prescription for their ailment. There is an ever-increasing belief that doctors exist to cure or relieve almost anything. That belief is magnified by $27 billion a year in drug company advertising.

Big Pharma is not altruistic, of course. Drug companies are in business to generate the maximum possible profits, and that goal shapes their decisions on how money will be spent. A 2012 paper in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) provides some relevant examples.

For instance, an eight-year study conducted by Express Scripts for the Welfare Fund, changes that will allow the Fund to continue to offer an affordable and reliable drug program, while helping you maintain your health and also reducing your out-of-pocket costs.

Be aware that most changes concern prescriptions for long-term, maintenance medications, not the occasional treatment of acute illness.

Formulary Changes

As the Fund’s pharmacy benefit manager, Express Scripts negotiates with drug manufacturers to provide the most cost-effective package available. This can lead to medications being dropped from the formulary – the list of medications covered by our Fund. When a drug is dropped, Express Scripts will offer one that is clinically equivalent and will inform doctors of the change. A prescription for medication dropped from the formulary can be filled if the member chooses to pay the full cost, but the Welfare Fund does not recommend this; your doctor should be able to find an equivalent medication on the formulary at a lower cost to you.

Within the formulary there is a distinction between “preferred” and “non-preferred” medications. The difference may affect the amount of your co-payment, but only at lower costs. There is a 20% co-payment with a minimum of $15 for a 30-day supply of a preferred drug and a 20% co-payment with a minimum of $30 for a 30-day supply of a non-preferred drug. If a preferred drug and a non-preferred drug each cost $50, the former would have a co-pay of $15 and the latter would have a co-pay of $30. However, if a preferred drug and a non-preferred drug each cost $400, each would have the same $80 co-pay.

Express Scripts has sent a targeted dispensing, to ensure proper application of “prior authorization” and step therapy rules. Other measures the Fund trustees are taking to assure the best use of resources include the introduction of “prior authorization” and “step therapy” (see below).

Prior Authorization

This program involves a review of a few, select medications before dispensing, to ensure proper application and cost effectiveness. You will be notified if and when a medication requires approval. If so, your doctor will need to contact Express Scripts before the prescription is filled again. You will be responsible for the full cost of the medication unless your doctor gets approval. Once prior approval is granted, you are responsible only for the relevant co-pay.

Step Therapy

This program asks you to use a lower-cost, clinical equivalent to the medication you have been taking. Express Scripts will notify you of alternatives and ask you to share this information with your doctor. If you and your doctor agree that the alternatives are not right for you, your doctor may request a coverage review. When appropriate, your doctor can request an override, allowing you to take the current medication without penalty.

The Fund is aware that the formulary changes, as well as the prior authorization and step therapy programs, may take time to get off the ground. However, the programs are essential to the Fund’s ongoing efforts to maintain an affordable and reliable prescription drug benefit for you and your family. More detailed information, contained in a letter sent to all Fund participants, is online at tinyurl.com/FP-letter-March-2014.
‘Review Your Personnel File Week’

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The PSC encourages all of its members – full-time and part-time teaching and non-teaching faculty, Higher Education Officers and College Lab Technicians series – to review their personal personnel file at least once a year. To help make this review an annual practice, the union launched Review Your Personnel File Week this year in the first full week of May.

When it comes to your career and your professional rights, accurate, complete and up-to-date information is crucial.

Article 19 of the contract states that you have two personnel files at the college: the “personal personnel” file and the “administration file.” Under the union contract, you have the right to review your personal personnel file, not the administration file. (The administration file is available only to those involved in decisions on your reappointment, promotion, certification or tenure.)

Your personal personnel file should include your academic and professional accomplishments at the college. Observation reports, annual evaluations, materials related to professional performance and documents submitted at your request are all included in the personal file.

**FILE CONTENTS**

Decisions about reappointment, promotion, certification and tenure are made, in part, based on the contents of your personal personnel file – so this file plays an important part in your career. You can request copies of materials that are in your personal file, and it’s a good idea to request a copy of any document that you don’t already have for your own records.

Douglas Medina, associate director of Baruch College’s honors program, checked his personal personnel file a few years ago and found some problems. “I discovered that previous evaluations were not in my file,” Medina told Clarion.

“Also, there was a form in my file folder that belonged to someone else.”

“This May, because of the union’s reminder, Medina decided to check his file again. “The HR representative responded right away and managed to get me an updated file within a few days. I was happy to see that my file had been updated as I’d requested. With the updated file, I reviewed all my evaluations and with different actions that have been taken related to my title,” said Medina. “I’m glad I checked, and I am encouraging colleagues at Baruch to do the same.”

What’s in your personal personnel file should concern everyone, since management is required by the contract to keep personnel and initial materials before they are placed in your file. You have the right to rebut any document placed in your file. It’s important that you’ve previously seen all the documents in your file, and that any notes that you made to those documents have been included. If any document has been included in the file without your knowledge, ask for a copy. Note on the copy that this is the first time you’re seeing it and record the date. Also contact your chapter grievance counselor. (More details on reviewing your personal personnel file are on the PSC website, at tinyurl.com/PSC-Check-File-Details.)

How to find and arrange to review your personal personnel file varies depending on your title and your campus. Some college offices may require you to make an appointment; others may allow you immediate access. Some may have someone present while you look at your file – which is permissible as long as it doesn’t interfere with your review in any way.

**FINDING YOUR FILE**

Specifics on how to find your personal personnel file at your college are listed on the union website (psc-cuny.org/our-rights/time-review-your-personnel-file). If you come across any concerns or problems contact your PSC chapter chair or chapter grievance counselor, or call the PSC office at 212-354-1252.

While Review Your Personnel File Week is a good reminder to check your file each year, you can request to review your file at any time.

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Queens College & Freedom Summer

Continued from page 6

ment. Over the years, he says, he kept running into people connect ed to Queens College who had been active in the civil rights struggle. In 2008, he donated things he had saved from the movement to the college library, and that donation became a push to establish the school’s civil rights archives. The archives now include around 35 collections, about 20 of them donated by alumni.

The QC volunteers saved things from daily life, things that might have been thrown away by someone living in Mississippi. The student es says, the letters home, the incident reports, the Polaroids give a glimpse of their everyday experiences, while also revealing interior lives during a period of intensive self-reflection.

Ben Alexander, head of QC’s special collections and archives, says the materials capture “what happened when the television cameras were off and no one was watching.”

The archive has grown to include documents from others with little prior connection to Queens College. The family of SNCC activist James Forman donated his books and other documents, in part because they wanted to have a home at a public university. (Form an’s personal papers are in the library of Congress.)

Another Freedom Summer volunteer, Susan Nichols, recently donated items that had been hidden in her closet in Montana. They included phone logs of vari ous movement field offices in the hours immediately after Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner disappeared. (These documents and other documents can be viewed in the QC library this fall.)

**COMING TOGETHER**

Norka Blackman-Richards, assistant director of Queens College’s SEEK Program, uses the archive in teaching her English 162 class. She says students get excited by what they learn.

“They had no clue about Free dom Summer. They had no clue that students around their age went down to Mississippi under dangerous conditions,” Blackman-Richards said. “They’re completely floored by this coming together for this cause.”

Dean Savage, a professor of sociology at QC, has also donated ma terial to the archive. This included a passage on the 1944 drive to Orangetown, South Carolina, in 1965 to register black voters. At the time, he was busy with his gradu ate studies at Columbia University. “Even though I didn’t have time,” he says, “once there was an invitation, I felt that I had to go.”

Savage’s materials recreate certain moments from his time in the South: transcripts of speeches given by civil rights leaders in Atlanta; press clippings about arrests in an Orangeburg sit-in; a snapshot of a Klansman walking past a burning cross at an openly announced Klan rally.

Ryan Hartley Smith, an adjunct lecturer at QC in graphic design, asks his students to take these pamphlets, buttons and photos from the past and relate them to today. In one of his classes, students went to the archive to choose an image or a slogan from the 1960s to relate to a current issue.

Smith’s students showcased their work in an event billed as a “Mass Meeting,” this spring. The students’ images were projected on a screen, people sang freedom songs and stu dents listened to a panel discussion of activists involved in current and past struggles for equal rights.

The event was one of a series at QC this year, coordinated by Levy as part of a Civil Rights An niversary Initiative sponsored by the college president’s office, and which included discussions on how to teach about the civil rights movement and a special advance screening of the PBS documentary Freedom Summer, which airs nationally on June 24.

**DEEPER UNDERSTANDING**

At the “Mass Meeting” event, one of Smith’s former students, Richard Ortega, moderated the panel discussion. Ortega, a graphic design major, has also spent time working with the archive. He says he’s gained a fuller understand ing of the movement. “It’s not just something in the history books,” he said. “It feels real.”

“In our own way, at Queens Col lege, we try to make a difference,” added Ortega, who is involved in organizing for LGBT and immigrant rights. “What I learned from talking to all these activists is that nothing happens overnight.”

**NYSUJ TOUT FOR P-12 PRACTICE**

Educator’s Voice has called for papers on the theme of “Critical Thinking and Problem Solving for the 21st Century Learner.” The collection of journal articles and submission forms, is published by New York State United Teachers (NYSUJT) and aims to provide “research-based, field-tested strategies that have been used by experienced educators to help schools close achievement gaps and ensure all students have a solid academic foundation.” Contributions from higher education faculty analyzing P-12 education are welcome.

The call for the next issue re quests article proposals on “investi gations into ways in which learning that is authentic, collaborative and hands-on can capture the essence of real-world tasks and prepare students for future social and defined by fast communications, ongoing change and increasing diversity.” Examples of topic areas range from STEM education to inquiry-based learning to environmental literacy.

The deadline for proposals is June 9. More details, as well as journal articles and submission forms, are online at tinyurl.com/loalg6s.
START-UP NY comes to CUNY

Tax giveaway plan is slammed

By SHONIMAI AHMAD, PETER HOGNESS & NEIL O’MAHUSA

“‘Tax-Free New York’ was the program’s original title when it was first proposed by Governor Andrew Cuomo a year ago. Soon rebranded as ‘START-UP NY’, it is extraordinary generous. Using space at SUNY and CUNY college campuses, participating business enterprises would pay no state or local taxes at all for ten years – no payment of sales, business or property taxes. Their employees would pay no state or local income tax for five years, and for the next five years, individuals would pay no taxes on income of up to $280,000.

START-UP NY was approved by the Legislature last summer, and since its inception, promoting it was aired during the NFL playoffs. The TV ads showed hard-working people in high-tech jobs, frequently moving from factory floors. But many economic development experts are skeptical about the program’s future results, and what will mean for CUNY is only starting to be defined.

Marilynn Rubin, professor of public management at John Jay College, describes the tax breaks in START-UP NY as “sweeping” and “unusual.”

“I was very surprised when I saw ‘no taxes,’” said Rubin. “I haven’t seen anything quite as expansive anywhere, certainly not in such a wide geographic area.”

UNSUPPORTED BY RESEARCH

Rubin is co-author of a report on business tax credits prepared for the New York State Tax Reform and Fairness Commission last November. There is “no conclusive evidence from research studies conducted since the mid-1950s to show that business tax incentives have an impact on net economic gains to the states,” the report states. “There is limited conclusive evidence from the research that, in general, have an impact on business location decisions.”

Other costs of doing business generally take precedence over taxes in these decisions...

A list of “best practices” from the National Business Incubator Association also says nothing about taxes. “Business incubators are espically good for businesses that are at the start-up stage...”

uman rights lawyer Joseph says her school has been “looking at spaces adjacent to the college”; the Medgar Evers College administration is expected to have a plan ready for review in May. The proposal will be presented to CCNY’s Faculty Senate, the CUNY PSC chapter, student government, the college’s faculty and local officials – all of whom will have a chance to review and comment before the proposal is forwarded to the state Education Department. The process hasn’t been as transparent as at other CUNY schools...

The process hasn’t been as transparent as at other CUNY schools...

![Picture](image1.jpg)
MEDIA'S SUDDEN INTEREST

Adjuncts get attention

By JANINE JACKSON

A djunct professors and their struggles seem to have made the big time. The New York Times has issued editorial alarm about the “college faculty crisis,” pointing to increased reliance on “abysmally paid” adjuncts, and carried a news story featuring a dedicated instructor – a PSC member – who sometimes “lies sleepless in the dark, wondering how long he will be able to afford the academic life.”

Adjuncts were described as leading lives of “Dickensian misery” in the Los Angeles Times, and as “an underpaid, invisible population,” in the Boston Globe. The Atlantic reported on adjunct faculty members’ determination to challenge their “unjust working conditions.”

A profile by the Minneapolis Star Tribune’s Maura Lerner of an adjunct with “no benefits, no job security or even a desk to call her own,” was reprinted under headlines from “Teaching College Courses for a Barista’s Pay,” to “Part-Time Professors Revolt.”

Adjuncts talked about living on food stamps or leaving teaching altogether in a PBS NewsHour segment on the STAR-UP NY

Continued from page 10

county’s anti-tax Proposition 13 in 1978. It is undeniably refreshing to see some bigger choices. The NewsHour segment did include some Q&A with a representative of the American Council of Education, Terry Hartle. But rather than question Hartle’s line that more than 70% of college teachers are contingent because colleges are “economic enterprises that need to stay in business,” or challenge the easy assumption, all the human interest stories were cast in what seems to “engineering – a field for which industry hacks are constantly claiming they can’t find qualified workers.”

In fact, the growth in universities’ reliance on part-time professors is tied to a dramatic decline in state support for higher education from coast to coast. State funding for public higher education stood at $1.06 billion per year in fiscal 1976. By fiscal 2011, that figure had dropped to $6.30 per $1,000, adding up to a 40% decline. “The decline in funding in the academic workforce,” noted a 2012 report from the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), with “colleges…increasingly relying on contingent faculty to do the bulk of undergraduate teaching.” In 1971, the three-quarters of US university faculty were still full-time – but by 2011, it was just 50%.

The collapse of the structures of adjunct exploitation. With three-quarters of US college students enrolled in public colleges and universities, winning equity for adjuncts will require a restoration of the billions that have been cut from public institutions’ budgets. That in turn means reversing the wave of tax cuts favoring the rich, which swept the US in the years after the victory of California’s anti-tax Proposition 13 in 1978.

“When does coverage lead to change?” the AFT reports. “When does coverage lead to change?” Janine Jackson is program director at Fair

When does coverage lead to change?

Janine Jackson is program director at Fair

Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR).

Clarion May 2014

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When does coverage lead to change?

Janine Jackson is program director at Fairness Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR).

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Push for trustee selection reform

By SHOMIAL AHMAD & PETER HOGNESS

One of Governor Andrew Cuomo’s nominees to the CUNY Board of Trustees was confirmed by the State Senate at the beginning of May. And a number of mayoral appointees to the board will soon see their terms expire, opening seats for Mayor Bill de Blasio to fill.

This turnover on the board has again put a spotlight on the process by which CUNY trustees are chosen – and the PSC is renewing its calls for reform.

EXPERIENCE NOT REQUIRED

“CUNY needs trustees who have deep experience with the issues of public higher education,” PSC President Barbara Bowen told Clarion. “CUNY trustees should be known as intellectual leaders and independent thinkers on university policy questions.”

That is not the case today. Current law provides that ten CUNY trustees shall be appointed by the governor and five by the mayor, subject to State Senate confirmation. (Two others serve ex officio.) A certain number of trustees must be CUNY alumni, and there must be representatives from each borough. Yet, nowhere in the law is higher education experience required.

“Too often governors and mayors have appointed their senior staff to the boards of SUNY and CUNY as a means of controlling a bloc of votes on those boards, preferring to place trustees of higher education in the trust sense of the word,” Assemblymember Rory Lancman told The Queens Courier in 2010. “The current board of trustees is almost completely devoid of educators, the PSC’s Brooklyn College chapter noted this April. “It is comprised of political appointees, whose main qualification was political support for current and former mayors and governors, rather than expertise in educational policy.” (See page 7.)

The PSC supports legislation that would change that. A current bill in the Assembly (A1669) and a companion bill in the State Senate (S4460) would create a blue-ribbon review panel to “recruit and screen trustee appointments” to recommend to the governor and the mayor, similar to the screening panels that currently exist for judicial nominations. Under this bill, potential nominees to the CUNY Board of Trustees would be recommended based on their professional expertise, demonstrated commitment to public higher education, and “actual and perceived” independence from political interference.

Bill calls for review panel

RUBBER STAMP

“Over the years, many trustee appointments have been made based on political alliances rather than qualifications and real connections to public higher education,” the bill stated in its justification. “This has created at times real and potential conflicts of interest and political influence that have interfered with the ability of trustees to responsibly carry out their duties.”

A more modest proposal, sponsored by Lancman and supported by the PSC, was passed by both the Assembly and State Senate in 2010: it required that CUNY or SUNY trustees not be direct employees of either the governor or mayor. That bill was vetoed by then-Governor David Paterson.

The lack of expertise has led to a decline in CUNY trustees’ independence, with the board increasingly acting as a rubber stamp. In past decades, critical issues like open admissions or the fate of remedial instruction would find trustees with strongly held positions on either side, and several who argued for views different from CUNY’s central administration. Today the board’s decisions are typically unanimous – even on a contentious issue like Pathways, where faculty opinion has been overwhelmingly on the opposite side.

The need to reform the trustee selection process was highlighted in a report from the New York City Bar Association more than decade ago: CUNY trustees should not “serve as a rubber stamp for the chancellor or any elected official,” the report said: “We recommend in the strongest terms the adoption of legislation eliminating conflicts of interests and establishing a nominating/screening panel.”

Fourteen years later, with a new wave of trustee appointments about to happen, the PSC says this is an idea whose time has come.

A CUNY Trustees’ Index

| Number of appointed CUNY trustee positions | 15 |
| Number of current appointed trustees who have a PhD | 0 |
| Number who have made their living by working at a university | 2 |
| Number who have published an article on higher education policy in a peer-reviewed journal | 1 |
| Number who have made campaign donations to the governor or mayor who appointed them | 7 |
| Length of time since a labor leader last served on the CUNY Board of Trustees | 25 years |
| In the past 25 years, number of trustees who have been corporate executives | 24 |
| Proportion of current appointed trustees who have been corporate executives | 53% |
| Proportion of current appointed trustees who have made their living by working at a university | 27% |

Above figures include all CUNY Trustees appointed by a governor or mayor. (Data from the University Faculty Senate (UFS) and University Student Senate (USS) who serve ex officio. The latter without a vote, are not included. Sources include Brooklyn.com, Businessweek.com, CNNf.com, Google Scholar, International Journal of Higher Education Leadership and Management, JSTOR, MacAndrewsandForbes.com, NYS Board of Elections, OpenSecrets.org, Pittsbu.org, among others.)